Israeli Luxury Cruise Cancelled After Spanish Shipping Ban

(Direct JTA Teletype Wire to The Jewish News)

LONDON — A refusal by Spain to allow the Israeli motel ship, the Nili, to use a southern Spanish port resulted Tuesday in cancellation of several holiday cruises by Somerfin of Geneva, the owners of the ship. The Spanish ban was part of a wider restrictive order by Spain on access to Spanish ports for Israeli ships believed to stem from Arab boycott pressure.

About 4,500 Britons had made reservations for the cruise, which was to have included ferry service from Southampton on May 15 on the $8,400,000 ship now being completed in a Scottish shipyard. Israel has accused Spain of yielding to Arab boycott pressure, but Spain has denied the charge, asserting it was simply restricting Israeli vessels to two ports — Palma in Majorca and Malaga.

It was believed here that Spain was acting against Israeli shipping in a bid to win Arab support for the current Spanish drive against British control of Gibraltar.

The Somerfin company announced it would return the reservations payments to the passengers. A substantial advertising campaign had brought total bookings of $4,400,000 in Britain.

The first hint that the cruise might have to be canceled developed last week when Spain began turning Israeli ships away from Spanish ports. Zim ships were the first to be affected.

An agreement regulating Israeli-Spanish shipping relations was expected to be signed in Madrid by a representative of the Zim Israel Lines and Spain's maritime undersecretary.

The agreement to which Spain assented will relate only to Zim shipping initially. But it was expected that the pact be widened to cover other Israeli maritime firms, although currently only Zim ships are calling at Spanish ports.

Spanish officials denied any official boycott and said the restrictions were due entirely to a revision of harbor dues, but Israelis noted that only Israeli ships were affected. The Nili owners began looking for other routes for the 7,800-ton Nili, which is due in London on May 11. It can carry 125 cars and 530 passengers.

The Spanish embassy in Washington insisted in a press release that Israeli ships for some time have been calling at the ports of Malaga and Palma without previously requesting permission from Spanish authorities and without meeting consular and customs requirements which are normal for vessels of all nations and common practice for all world shippers.

With the recent increase of calls by Israeli flag ships and their inclusion of other ports in eastern and southern Spain, Spanish authorities have requested that such vessels, having no consular representation in Spanish territory, restrict their stops to the ports of Malaga and Palma where Israeli ships with tourists are accustomed to call, the release said. It denied that the action had any political overtones.

The statement failed to explain that Spain has refused to establish diplomatic and consular exchanges with Israel.

Reports were received in Washington that, last week, the Spanish port of Cadiz refused for three days to unload the Israeli ship "Yehuda," on the basis of "new instructions" to deny rights to Israeli vessels. At the port of Las Palmas, another Israeli ship was refused fuel, and harbor facilities there and at Barcelona will be closed to them after April 30.

Shipping sources termed the Spanish move "an arbitrary, sudden imposition of a ban that will prevent Israeli ships access to Spanish ports."

Israel said it would take various diplomatic steps in international and maritime organizations if Spain persists in implementing orders to deny harbor facilities to Israeli shipping.

The Barcelona order, according to officials of Zim Israel Lines at Haifa, read: "As from the 30th of April, no Israeli-flag ship, carrying either passengers or cargo, will be permitted movement in this port because Israel has no diplomatic relations with Spain."

An official communique at Las Palmas stated: "As Israel has neither diplomatic relations nor trade or bankers agreement with Spain, no Israel ship will be permitted to carry out trade transactions in this port."

It was learned that, under Arab pressures, the anti-Israeli policies were about to be put into effect in both ports on March 18, but were postponed after intervention by local Spanish tradesmen dealing with Israel.

At least two steps are open to Israel on this issue, it was said here. Israel and Spain are both members of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, so that Israel would appeal to GATT for intervention on the grounds that Spain is violating the GATT charter. Another course seen here as open to Israel is to point out that Spain's action might jeopardize the Madrid government's efforts toward a link with the European Market. Meanwhile, a Spanish passenger liner docked in Haifa, and received complete port services. The ship carried Spanish tourists who were taken directly from the Haifa dock for a tour of northern Israel.

'Time to Forgive' Rabbi on Nazism

The time has come for those who hate Germany and the Germans to forgive that country for the slaughter of more than 6,000,000 Jews under the Nazis, a German-born American rabbi declared.

Writing in the current issue of Look Magazine, Rabbi Joseph Asher of Temple Emanuel, Greensboro, N. C., said that those who carry "unending retribution" in their hearts toward Germany must "take a new look into their feelings."

Rabbi Asher is himself a former victim of Nazi terror. In his youth he was driven out of school three years after Hitler came to power. His father, an Othodox rabbi in Wiesbaden, perished at the Buchenwald death camp.

Recently returned from his first trip to Germany since the time he was forced to flee, the rabbi said: 'When I first returned to the scene of my youth, suspicion and loathing were my uppermost sentiments. Having seen the Hitler tragedy in all of its enormity, I was neither willing to forgive nor forget."

But talks at length with German students of the postwar generations convinced him that guilt for Nazi crimes must not fall on the shoulders of Germany's young people. Asked Rabbi Asher in his article:

How much of a burden of guilt can you lay on the shoulders of an 18-year-old boy without damaging his soul almost beyond repair?"

Since little or nothing is taught in German schools about the story of the Jews and Judaism, Rabbi Asher proposed that a number of German-speaking American rabbis be asked each to devote a month to teaching in Germany secondary schools. He said:

"There exists in Germany a virtual vacuum of information on Judaism, other than its victimization in the Nazi era. There cannot be anything but a warped view of Jews and Judaism if the only contract with them is either to read of the tragedy or of the lingering bitterness that one imagines besets Jewish people in relation to Germany."

Opera to Finish Series of SOC Symphony

The South Oakland Symphony Orchestra, Wayne Dunlap conducting, will finish its current series with Puccini's opera "La Boheme," sung in English, by the Turnau Opera Players, Oak Park High School.

Named after the European director, Prof. Josef Turnau, the 10-year-old company has established itself as one of America's outstanding workshops in opera—singing, directing, designing and staging. Tickets at the box office.

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